

# ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST

A WILD WEST ADAPTATION OF  
SHAKESPEARE'S *ROMEO AND JULIET*

By August Mergelman

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**SYNOPSIS:** Ramona Mae and Joel are in a disconcerting place. The feud between their papas is the obstacle they face. The local padre catches wise - - Ramona lets it slip - - and Tita wants to teach the boy the *in's* and *out's* of courtship. His mother, on the other hand, has someone else in mind; Miss Paris is a debutant, the highfalutin' kind. When crazy Herman steals a horse, Ramona gets the blame. It's up to Joel to save the day and clear his sweetheart's name. Some potent pollen conks him cold. Ramona is the cure. She almost wakes him up, but then the pollen gets to her. And so the tragic story ends, but don't you be misled. The way *this* version ends would turn the Bard a shade of red.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 MEN, 9 WOMEN, 3 EITHER, EXTRAS)

MR. CABOT (m) ..... The proprietor of a saloon. (42 lines)

MRS. CABOT (f) ..... His social-climbing wife. (35 lines)

JOEL CABOT (m) ..... Their son. (171 lines)

TITA (f) ..... Their housekeeper. (91 lines)

MR. MONTGOMERY (m) ..... A rancher. (23 lines)

MRS. MONTGOMERY (f) ..... His God-fearin' wife. (17 lines)

RAMONA MAE (f) ..... Their daughter. (118 lines)

BEN MONTGOMERY (m/f) ..... Ramona's cousin. (56 lines)

HERMAN (m) ..... A hired hand. (97 lines)

FATHER LAWRENCE (m) ..... The play's narrator. (91 lines)

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SHERIFF (m/f) .....A thick-headed law enforcer. (27 lines)

MISS PARIS (f).....A marriageable socialite. (36 lines)

RUSSELL LINDE (m).....A vaudeville sharpshooter. (1 line)

SUSANNA (f).....A young woman. (2 lines)

EARL (m) .....A big fellow. (No lines)

MILLIE (f).....His best girl. (2 lines)

MRS. PEOPLES (f) .....A ubiquitous eccentric. (2 lines)

MRS. BROWN (f) .....A party guest. (4 lines)

UNDERTAKER (m/f) .....A busy individual in Victor. (2 lines)

TOWNSFOLK (m/f).....Citizens of Victor. (Man 1 - - 1 line;  
Woman 1 - - 1 line; Boy 1 - - 2 lines; Boy 2 - - 2 lines; Girl 1 - - 1 line;  
Guest 1 - - 2 lines; Guest 2 - - 1 line; Guest 3 - - 1 line; Voice 1 - - 2  
lines; Voice 2 - - 2 lines; Voice 3 - - 3 lines)

**A NOTE ABOUT CASTING**

At the director's discretion, gender roles and like may be reassigned to fit the demographics of the company. As a young adolescent, Ben may be portrayed effectively by a female. Pronouns may be changed to portray the sheriff and the undertaker as women. Lines assigned to members of crowd may be changed in any number of ways to suit the cast size. If portraying Tita as Hispanic is not feasible, her name and her verbal idiosyncrasies may be changed at the director's discretion; for instance, she would work well as Maggie, spoken with an Irish brogue.

# ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST

## SETTING

Late September in Victor, Colorado.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### ACT ONE

*Scene 1* ..... The street.

*Scene 2* ..... The Cabots' kitchen and the Montgomerys' porch.

*Scene 3* ..... The saloon.

*Scene 4* ..... The dark of night and the hayloft.

*Scene 5* ..... The Cabots' kitchen and the church office.

*Scene 6* ..... The street.

*Scene 7* ..... The Cabots' kitchen and the courtship montage.

### ACT TWO

*Scene 1* ..... The street.

*Scene 2* ..... The dark of night.

*Scene 3* ..... The saloon and the inside of a kaleidoscope.

## A NOTE ABOUT STAGING

Select set pieces suffice to establish most of the locales, but the crowd scenes - - taking place on the street and in the saloon - - need only a clear playing area. Vaudeville-style placards denoting location would certainly be stylistically appropriate. The narrative interludes allow one scene to segue into the next as seamlessly as possible, which is essential for effective staging. The short scene following the party, for instance, can be portrayed in front of the curtain while the hayloft is being set up. Building the hayloft will take some doing, but what's an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* without some sort of balcony scene?

## ABOUT THE PLAY

Set in Victor, Colorado, *Ramona and Joel* is a wild-west comedy adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. It is not a parody of Shakespeare's play; rather, it is an original drama in its own right, intended to be presented with sincerity. The narrative style and the cowboy poetry give the work an unmistakable storybook quality. The irreverent translation of names and events will delight the ardent *bardologist*, but the plot twists will keep the whole audience guessing what's going to happen next. Even the happy ending remains in peril until the final moments of the second act.

Though Shakespeare's original provides the framework, several other stylistic influences are present. Certainly, there is an air of nineteenth-century melodrama, crossed with 1950's black-and-white westerns. The pervasive poetry pays homage to the playwright/poets of old. Subtleties of humor and local color are manifest in the iambic heptameter, stichomythia, and rhyming couplets. The casual disregard of the fourth wall owes much to twentieth-century theatricalism.

The twenty to twenty-five roles are divided evenly among males and females, several roles being gender neutral. The broad range of ages makes the play ideal for community theatre groups as well as schools. Select set pieces suffice to establish most of the locales, but the crowd scenes need only a clear playing area. The narrative interludes allow one scene to flow into the next as seamlessly as possible. The running time is approximately eighty minutes.

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*For Steve's Heroes.*

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**ACT ONE, SCENE 1**

**AT RISE:**

*Enter FATHER LAWRENCE, on a street in Victor, Colorado.*

**FATHER:** The gentlemen in fancy top hats gather 'round the tracks  
To watch the ponies promenade with jockeys on their backs.  
They sweat so much they start to stink, and that's just in the  
stands  
'Cause when the race is done, the legal tender changes hands.  
Now here in Victor, Colorado, we don't make a fuss  
To watch our boys run races. Workin' duds are fine with us.  
And what we lack in top hats we make up for in theatrics.  
A guy can't win unless he yells and waves and kicks.  
That's how it's done, I hear. I'm not a gamblin' man myself.  
A man who takes his orders leaves that practice on the shelf,  
And I encourage all my flock to heed my sound advice,  
That gamblin' - - though it's thrillin' - - is a base and wicked vice,  
Unfortun'ly, a vice we hold in reverent regard.  
If you got cash to burn in Victor, Brother, it ain't hard.

*Individual CABOTS and MONTGOMERYS appear as FATHER LAWRENCE describes them.*

**FATHER:** Why, twenty years or so ago, Montgomery and Cabot  
Made a friendly wager on the trail to hunt a rabbit.  
As they lay down their dollar bills, it caught 'em unawares,  
But which one really won that wager? Now we're splittin' hares,  
Or so to speak.

**MR. CABOT:** I know I fired first!

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** That may be true,  
But it was me who killed the rabbit!

**FATHER:** That's enough from both of you!

*Grumbling, MR. CABOT and MR. MONTGOMERY back away from each other.*

**FATHER:** When gold was struck not far from here, a minin' town was born,  
But that ol' grudge they bear shows ne'er a sign of bein' worn.  
Montgom'ry wed a pious member of our congregation.  
She takes great pains to keep her fam'ly headed for salvation.  
The couple had great plans for their anticipated son,  
But he came out a girl instead. Ramona - - she's the one.  
Her parents send her off to school. On this they do concur:

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** A town with more saloons than churches  
ain't no place for her.

*RAMONA hangs her head and exits.*

**FATHER:** Ol' Cabot made good use of his high-stakes proclivity.  
Why, his saloon provides finest gamblin' in our city.  
The Mrs. Cabot has designs on their beloved baby.

**MRS. CABOT:** I'll find a fittin' bride for Joel, a wealthy bride.

*JOEL wrinkles his nose.*

**FATHER:** Well, maybe.

*Enter TITA.*

**FATHER:** That's Tita. She's the cook, and Joel helps her with her chores.

**TITA:** He helps me? No. He helps himself, and then he asks for more.

**FATHER:** A proper feud encompasses a fair of amount of folks,  
And all you need to stoke it is a few untimely jokes.

**HERMAN:** That's my cue.

**FATHER:** Hold your horses, son.

*HERMAN freezes. FATHER LAWRENCE nods toward him.*

**FATHER:** Montgomery's hired hand.

A peaceful day is torture orn'ry Herman just can't stand.

ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST

Enter BEN.

**FATHER:** Today he's led astray a sheep, Ramona's cousin Ben.  
Them boys are where they oughtn't be. Our story now begins.

Exit ALL but HERMAN and BEN.

**HERMAN:** They say that Cabot's got a new roulette wheel made of  
gold,  
With ruby numbers.

**BEN:** I'd feel more at ease if it were old  
And made of pine if I laid my good money down.

**HERMAN:** How come?

**BEN:** 'Cause that means he's the losin' type. That's good for me.

**HERMAN:** That's dumb.

If I had me some cash, I'd buy a ruby-studded horse  
And git.

**BEN:** Git what?

**HERMAN:** Git outta here. And take my girl, of course.

**BEN:** Alright, but you ain't got no girl.

**HERMAN:** Says who?

**BEN:** Says me.

**HERMAN:** You are presumptuous to deny the things you fail to see.

Enter JOEL.

**HERMAN:** That fella there is Joel, I think. That's Old Man Cabot's  
son.

**BEN:** Don't you go startin' nothin', Herman.

**HERMAN:** Just a little fun?

**BEN:** A little fun for you is really trouble in the makin'.

**HERMAN:** Then you stay put and try not to distract me with your  
shakin'. (*Scratching his head.*)

I coulda sworn that . . .

**JOEL:** You lose somethin'?

**HERMAN:** Matter of fact, I did.

Well, I don't mean to bother you, but - - shoot - - that thing is hid.

**JOEL:** Have I seen you 'round town before? You seem . . .

**HERMAN:** Can't say's ya have.

I don't roam off too far unless I'm huntin' for a calf.

Now where'd the heck I . . . ?

**JOEL:** Not to pry, but you sure look confused.

**HERMAN:** I guess I must. I just misplaced a . . . Darn it!

**JOEL:** Wha'd ya lose?

**HERMAN:** Oh, it weren't nothin' much - - a little piece of paper's  
all - -

But what I wrote upon it . . .

**JOEL:** Which direction did it fall?

**HERMAN:** I think . . .

**JOEL:** If you look there, then I'll look here.

*HERMAN discreetly pulls a piece of paper from his breast pocket.*

**HERMAN:** Well, whatcha know!

If it had been a snake, it woulda bit me. Gotta go.

**JOEL:** Now, you got me as curious as a kid on Christmas Eve

'Bout what's so darned important 'bout that paper. You can't  
leave.

**HERMAN:** I s'pose I owe you somethin' for your time.

**JOEL:** Darn right you do!

**HERMAN:** But I warn you - - it sounds peculiar - - even though it's  
true.

It started when my buddy made a joke at my expense,  
When he says that I'm as ugly as a mile of crooked fence,  
And I says, "That the best that you can do?" and he says, "No."  
And pretty soon I made a bet with him that I could throw  
A more insultin' name at him than he could throw at me.  
So I wrote down these nasty hurtful comments.

**JOEL:** Let me see.

**HERMAN:** 'Fraid not, but you can help me out by sayin' what you  
think

When I try these remarks on you.

**JOEL:** Well, I dunno . . .

**HERMAN:** You stink . . .

Just like the carcass of a grizzly in the heat.

ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST

You smell like burnin' trash, fermented cheese, and rancid meat.

**JOEL:** Well, that caught me off guard alright, but I take a bath each week,

So you should get more personal than just to say I reek.

Suppose this fella walks bow-legged, or he drools a lot.

You gotta git 'im where he's tender.

**HERMAN:** Where's *your* tender spot?

**JOEL:** Well, that don't matter nothin'.

**HERMAN:** (*Noticing JOEL's spurs.*) Never mind. I think I know.

**JOEL:** Know what?

**HERMAN:** Your horse is your Achilles' ankle.

**JOEL:** Is that so?

**HERMAN:** Your spurs have felt around the edges.

**JOEL:** She's got tender skin.

**HERMAN:** If I insult my buddy's horse, I'm guaranteed to win.

A fella's soft about his horse. Excuse me - - I meant turtle.

A slug could out-run that old nag, and that counts jumpin' hurdles.

**JOEL:** I think you plum forgot who you're supposed to be offendin'.

**HERMAN:** Now don't get all bent outta shape. You know we're just pretendin'.

I reckon I'll just win that bet, and I'll have you to thank.

I think it's time that I got goin'.

**JOEL:** (*Snatching the paper.*) Hey! This paper's blank!

**HERMAN:** Well, so it is! Now, how'd that happen?

**JOEL:** (*Rolling up his sleeves.*) Never mind your list.

If you don't win that insult match, you'll have to use your fists,

And that's where I can really help. This lesson's compliment'ry.

**HERMAN:** Now, really, there's no cause for violent acts among the gentry.

**JOEL:** (*Swings, but misses.*) A shame it has to come to this between you and your friend.

But I just couldn't live with my own sorry self and send

You out so unprepared to meet your adversary.

(*Delivering left jab.*) Consider me your trainin' ground, your friendly sanctuary.

*JOEL and HERMAN fight. Several TOWNSFOLK watch, some placing bets on the winner. Enter the SHERIFF and FATHER LAWRENCE.*

**BEN:** So much for stayin' out of trouble.

**SHERIFF:** What the heck is this?

**FATHER:** It looks to me like Sunday school, but somethin' went amiss.

**JOEL:** Oh, I'm just teachin' this here boy a lesson.

**SHERIFF:** Lesson's finished.

I will not let civility in Victor be diminished.

*Enter MR. MONTGOMERY.*

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** This mess is Cabot's doin', Sheriff. I can swear to that!

*Enter MR. CABOT.*

**MR. CABOT:** Montgom'ry sicced that kid on Joel. I can smell a rat!

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Now, let's get one thing straight, you liar . . .

**MR. CABOT:** Don't you point at me!

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** You sicced that boy of yours on Herman, near as I can see.

**SHERIFF:** It isn't clear to me just why these boys were throwin' punches,

But I ain't near as dumb as I appear, and my best hunch is

They were merely actin' out a battle of a war

That you two temperamental codgers started long before.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** I'll bet . . .

**FATHER:** You said the magic word. You bet your hat you did.

And I'll just bet my badge the altercation 'tween these of kids

Revolved around a harmless bet. That's how it always starts.

**SHERIFF:** Well, let's just ask the witness, Ben.

**BEN:** But . . .

**SHERIFF:** Ben, I know you're smart.

**FATHER:** Did gambling precipitate today's ungainly fight?

**BEN:** Well, that's not necessarily the way it came to light.

*ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST*

You see . . .

**SHERIFF:** Was there a bet involved? Just answer, *yes* or *no*.

**BEN:** Then I would have to answer *yes*, but Sheriff . . .

**SHERIFF:** There ya go!

**FATHER:** It's bad enough this town's got gamblin'. Pardon, Brother Cabot.

As long as I remember, gamblin's been our wicked habit.

*CABOT begins to protest.*

**FATHER:** Don't get me wrong. It has its place, accordin' to the law,  
But gamblin' in the streets can lead to brawls like we just saw.  
A sim'lar skirmish, long ago - - no need to mention names - -  
Began a feud that makes the War of 1812 look tame.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Is there a point to this?

**FATHER:** Alright. I'll terminate my sermon.

**HERMAN:** A sermon? That means I'm a week ahead of Sunday.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Herman.

*The MEN chuckle.*

**SHERIFF:** It looks as though the storm has passed us.

**FATHER:** Ah, but in its wake,

We fortify the levee for the next, for prudence sake.

**SHERIFF:** I thought that you was done.

**FATHER:** I am, but you are just beginnin'.

It's you who must uphold the law. I just point out the sinnin',  
And you don't just uphold the law, you also lay it down.

So how do you propose to rid all gamblers from our town?

**SHERIFF:** I'll run out any gamblers in a blink, or even quicker.

They won't come back until the day the dead rise up in Victor.

**MAN:** Till when?

**MRS. PEOPLES:** (*Who has been lying in a nearby trough.*) He said,  
"Until the day the dead rise up in Victor."

**SHERIFF:** Yup.

**MR. CABOT:** That sounds to me like banishment.

**SHERIFF:** So call it what you will.

I've spoken my last word about it.

**MR. CABOT:** Words - - I've heard my fill.

*The crowd disperses. The feuding families divide the stage.*

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** (To BEN.) Your aunt needs you to try on shoes.

**BEN:** I got shoes.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** They annoy 'er.

And, Herman, it's your day off. Don't embarrass your employer.

*Exit MR. MONTGOMERY with BEN. HERMAN saunters off.*

**JOEL:** That lady looks like Ma.

**MR. CABOT:** It is, but who's that fancy filly?

**JOEL:** A candidate to be my bride, no doubt.

**MR. CABOT:** Oh, this is silly.

**JOEL:** You're tellin' me?

**MR. CABOT:** Hush up. They'll hear.

**JOEL:** Where *does* she dig them up?

Does she look like the kinda girl for me?

**MR. CABOT:** You're just a pup.

*Enter MRS. CABOT and MISS PARIS.*

**MRS. CABOT:** Why, Joel, dear, your lip is cut.

**MR. CABOT:** He had an accident.

**JOEL:** Involvin' someone else's fist.

**MR. CABOT:** And it was evident

That fist was workin' for that dirty crook, Montgomery.

**MRS. CABOT:** You boys and your commotion. You can save your tawdry summ'ry.

We are but ladies, after all; you know how violence scares us.

And I ain't even made an introduction for Miss Paris.

**MR. CABOT:** I'm pleased to meet ya.

**MISS PARIS:** Charmed, I'm sure.

**MRS. CABOT:** And Joel - - he's my son.

*JOEL bows grandly.*

**JOEL:** The honor, Miss, is mine alone.

**MRS. CABOT:** Oh, he's just havin' fun.

And speakin' of some fun, it's time we Cabots had a swa-rie

**JOEL:** What's that?

**MR. CABOT:** I hope it's not expensive.

**MRS. CABOT:** (*Sharply.*) Vernon!

**MR. CABOT:** Sorry.

**MRS. CABOT:** (*Sweetly.*) A swa-rie is a party.

**JOEL:** Where?

**MRS. CABOT:** At our saloon, of course.

Tomorrow.

**JOEL:** I got plans to see a guy about a horse.

**MISS PARIS:** Now, Mrs. Cabot, I would never want to be a bother.

**MRS. CABOT:** Oh, don't be silly, dear. I made a promise to your father.

I'd show you high society in Victor.

**MR. CABOT:** Victor?

**MRS. CABOT:** Vernon!

Our plans are waitin' to be made, and daylight is a burnin'.

*Exit MRS. CABOT and MISS PARIS.*

**MR. CABOT:** If daylight is a burnin', let's go fishin' by the creek.

A man's allowed to be himself in private once a week.

*Exit MR. CABOT and JOEL. Enter MR. and MRS. MONTGOMERY, followed by BEN.*

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** A teenage girl in Victor is a genuine abhorrence.

She's better off residin' with her Uncle Tom in Florence.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** You could be right.

**BEN:** But it's still summer! Please, don't send her back.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** And where is she right now?

**BEN:** I reckon by the railroad tracks.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** Whatever for?

**BEN:** She wants to catch a glimpse of Russell Linde.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** Oh, not that vulgar mountebank. Is he in town again?

**BEN:** He's s'posed to come back through.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** I don't approve of her fixation.

**BEN:** Don't fret, Aunt Mae. It's just my cousin's wild imagination.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Ramona's just a girl, and girls get crushes every the day.

**MRS. MONTGOMERY:** It's still disgraceful. Let's get home.

**BEN:** I guess I'd better stay - -

I mean - - to wait for Herman.

**MR. MONTGOMERY:** Leave 'im here for all I care.

That hired hand's caused me more trouble than a man can spare.

*Exit MR. and MRS. MONTGOMERY.*

**BEN:** If I know that delinquent, he ain't nearly satisfied.

If I can't keep 'im out of trouble, least I know I tried.

You just can't help but like the guy. He talks just like a riddle,

But when he goes and picks a fight, I'm always in the middle.

*RAMONA and HERMAN enter. RAMONA chases HERMAN around BEN.*

**RAMONA:** You give that back!

**HERMAN:** I will in time. I want to read it first.

"My Dearest Russell, I'm so full of love that I could burst.

When you came into town, I watched your crew set up your tent.

I blew your face a kiss . . . "

**RAMONA:** I'm gonna blow your face a dent!

**HERMAN:** "With all my love, your truest fan, Ramona Mae Montgom'ry."

If he remembers you, he's got a superhuman mem'ry.

*RAMONA sits and cries.*

**HERMAN:** *(With tremendous chagrin.)* Now, Romie, I was only teasin'.

ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST

*Having fooled HERMAN, RAMONA snatches the note and hits him in the arm.*

**HERMAN:** Ouch! That really hurt!

**RAMONA:** (*Brightly.*) It serves you right for teasin' me, you scurvy bag of dirt!

**HERMAN:** For shame, you helpless dainty thing. If Russell heard you speak.

**BEN:** You know he's passin' through here on his way to Cripple Creek.

**RAMONA:** I know. I can't contain myself, but when?

**BEN:** They never said.

**RAMONA:** (*With great ceremony.*) But when he does, he'll shoot a golden apple off my head.

**HERMAN:** I wish I'd never read that note.

*Enter TITA.*

**TITA:** Did you say you could read?

**HERMAN:** Why, certainly I can.

**TITA:** Then you are just the man I need.

My mistress plans a big fiesta for tomorrow night,  
And I'm supposed to find the proper people to invite,  
But then she never tells me who is proper, who is not.  
A lot of folks in this town - - they don't even got a pot.  
So I decide if you can read, that's where I draw the line.

**BEN:** But what about the folks that can't?

**TITA:** That's your affair, not mine.

**HERMAN:** So tell us what the invite says.

**TITA:** If I could read I would.

*Mañana*, at the Cabots' place.

**HERMAN:** We wouldn't miss it.

**TITA:** Good.

**BEN:** Now, wait a minute, ma'am. Your invitation is considerate,  
But . . .

**TITA:** You are not invited. You just told me you're illiterate.

**HERMAN:** (*Dancing with TITA.*) Will there be dancin' at this party?

**TITA:** Don't get fresh with me,

You young impert'nent man, just 'cause you're . . . limber as a tree.

*TITA swings him around.*

**HERMAN:** Hey!

**TITA:** If you would like to dance with me, you must be in my reach.  
And keep your shoulders straight.

**HERMAN:** She's got a grip just like a leech.

**TITA:** Oh, I give up. You're just a boy. Go home to *Mamacita*,  
But don't forget tomorrow. You might meet a *señorita*.

*Exit TITA.*

**HERMAN:** This party's gonna be more fun than hornets in your pants.

**RAMONA:** Do you suppose that Russell Linde could be there?

**HERMAN:** There's a chance.

**BEN:** Well, I don't care if Moses comes. You two can count me out.

**RAMONA:** I never met a wetter blanket.

**HERMAN:** Ah, just let 'im pout.

**RAMONA:** But Pa would kill me if he knew. We're enemies with Cabots.

**HERMAN:** And why should children always take their folks' unfriendly habits?

Just what did Cabots ever do to you?

**RAMONA:** You know, that's true.

**HERMAN:** And there's a chance the famous Russell Linde will be there too.

**FATHER:** Well, that concludes the op'nin' scene. I guess you see the tangles,  
Even all you situated 'long the sharper angles.

## ACT ONE, SCENE 2

*One side of the stage is the CABOTS' kitchen. The other is the MONTGOMERYS' porch. A MAID presents a platter of hors d'oeuvres, and MRS. CABOT dismisses her with a nod of approval.*

*ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST*

**FATHER:** Next ev'nin' all them invitees was busy gettin' ready.

The hostess person'lly scrutinized each parcel of confetti.

**MISS PARIS:** Why, Mrs. Cabot - - I must say - - you haven't spared expenses.

**MRS. CABOT:** My husband's sure to say the same once he collects his senses.

**MISS PARIS:** Then would you say he's quite well-off? Oh, I don't mean to pry.

**MRS. CABOT:** I do not take offence to such inquiries.

**MISS PARIS:** Nor do I.

**MRS. CABOT:** Then I would say he's quite well off, though clearly not by birth.

Did you not once allude to havin' in-laws of great worth?

**MISS PARIS:** Well, Father, as you know, is rich, but yes - - my sister Ann

Coincident'ly wed herself an enterprisin' man.

Why, just for fun, he used to dive for pearls. He had such stealth.

So often eccentricity accompanies great wealth.

**MRS. CABOT:** They must be very happy with each other.

**MISS PARIS:** Yes, they were,

But he expired suddenly and left his wealth to her.

**MRS. CABOT:** But how?

**MISS PARIS:** He drowned, in his own bathtub, on the fifth of May.

Ironic that he died the way he did.

**MRS. CABOT:** Well, I should say.

*On the porch, RAMONA, BEN, and HERMAN get into their disguises.*

**RAMONA:** But what if Russell likes the way I look in my disguise?

And when he sees normal . . .

**BEN:** He'll be in for some surprise.

*The BOYS snicker.*

**RAMONA:** Go 'head - - make jokes at my expense. I won't give up my dreams.

I'm serious about my quest, as silly as it seems.

**HERMAN:** Our dreams are just like rabies. It's all over once we're bitten.

**RAMONA:** But who the devil's bitin' us and makin' us so smitten?

**HERMAN:** The culprit is a girl, in fact, a queen - - the Queen of Hearts.

*(Presenting a playing card with some slight-of-hand.)*

She has a team of ladybugs to pull her tiny cart.

She knows just what you want, and what you think, and how you feel,

And when you sleep, she fills your head with dreams you'd swear are real.

**RAMONA:** Before she puts them in, how do they look - - those dreams and hopes?

*Faint specks of colored light appear.*

**HERMAN:** Like all them odds and ends they put inside kaleidoscopes.

Not much to see by day, but when reflected in the lens,

They are a dazzling sight.

**BEN:** What do they look like?

**HERMAN:** That depends.

The soldier - - he sees glory, and the cobbler - - he sees shoes,

And she makes Father Lawrence dream of over-flowin' pews.

She gives Ramona dreams of gettin' hitched with Russell Linde.

And Russell dreams of Lillian Russell. Sorry to offend.

The sheriff dreams of puttin' Jesse James behind them bars.

And Ben here dreams of catchin' real live fireflies in jars.

**BEN:** The hell I do! Well, just that once. What difference does it make?

**RAMONA:** And how 'bout you?

**HERMAN:** She never comes, so I just lie awake.

**RAMONA:** The Queen of Hearts has never called on you? I don't believe.

**HERMAN:** If we don't get, we'll be arrivin' when it's time to leave.

*TITA follows JOEL into the kitchen.*

ROMEO AND JULIET GO WEST

**TITA:** Get over here, *Muchacho*. You aren't nearly finished yet.

You got a crooked collar still.

**JOEL:** This get-up makes me sweat.

**TITA:** I tell you this since you were just a boy - - but you don't listen - -

That horses sweat, and men perspire; girls like me just glisten.

**JOEL:** You think that any other glist'nin' girls will come tonight?

**TITA:** Not counting me, I'd say . . .

**JOEL:** No chance in Hell?

**TITA:** You could be right.

**JOEL:** Not countin' you and Mama's friend, Miss Paris. You forgot.

**TITA:** She's very nice.

**JOEL:** But you forgot to count her.

**TITA:** Well, so what?

She slipped my mind.

**JOEL:** The words you say ain't all the words I hear.

You always go along with Ma until the coast is clear.

**TITA:** Perhaps that girl is not so bad as she appears at first.

**JOEL:** Conceited, spoiled, and social-climbin'?

**TITA:** You just think the worst.

**JOEL:** I'd like to skip this thing and spend the evenin' in the stable.

**TITA:** That's fine by me. What's stopping you?

**JOEL:** If only I were able,

But that would cause embarrassment for Mama.

**TITA:** I know better,

'Cause I've known you since you were just a squawking diaper-wetter.

"Do you suppose that any glist'ning girls will be attending?"

What kind of question's that to ask me?

**JOEL:** I was just pretendin'!

**TITA:** Mmm-hmm.

*BY AUGUST MERGELMAN*

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